

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 04165 030909Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 INSE-00 DODE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9731
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 4165

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: IPP-78; BOAT CASE DISCUSSION WITH IMMIGRATION DEPT

REF: HONG KONG 4054

1. CONOFF VISIT HONG KONG IMMIGRATION DEPT (HKID) ON MARCH 31
TO DISCUSS IPP-78. THAT DISCUSSION RESULTED IN FOLLOWING
POINTS OF INTEREST.

2. CONTRARY TO WHAT UNHCR REP CARPENTER TOLD US DURING VISIT
HERE, HONG KONG WILL NOT NECESSARILY ACCEPT FOR RESETTLEMENT
ANY BOAT CASE REFUGEE WITH RELATIVE HERE. HKID WAS INFORMED
BY UNHCR THAT IT HAD SMALL NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN AREA WHO
WISHED RESETTLEMENT IN HONG KONG, BUT DID NOT HAVE CLOSE
RELATIVE (SPOUSE, PARENT OR CHILD) NORMALLY REQUIRED FOR
APPLICATION. HKID TOLD UNHCR THAT IT WOULD CONSIDER THIS
GROUP SYMPATHETICALLY DESPITE MORE DISTANT FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.
WHILE HKID MIGHT CONSIDER ANOTHER SMALL GROUP IF
PRESENTED BY UNHCR, THIS IS NOT OPEN-ENDED OFFER.
HKID IS WELL AWARE THAT HIGH PERCENTAGE OF BOAT CASE
EXCAPEES ARE ETHNIC CHINESE, MANY OF WHOM POTENTIALLY
COULD HAVE DISTANT RELATIVES HERE.

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3. QUESTION WILL BE DIRECTED AT SECRETARY OF STATE
IN PARLIAMENT THIS WEEK ABOUT U.K. POSSIBLY ACCEPTING
FOR RESETTLEMENT BOAT CASE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG.
REPLY WILL BE GIBEN THAT THIS IS UNDER ACTIVE
CONSIDERATION. PERSONAL ESTIMATE OF HKID OFFICER
WITH WHOM CONOFF SPOKE IS THAT U.K. MIGHT ACCEPT

20 TO 30 REFUGEES.

4. WITH REGARD TO ACCOMMODATIONS FOR BOAT CASE REFUGEES, THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT HONG KONG GOVT WILL BE ABLE MAKE ANY ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE. REOPENING OF A CAMP IS CONSIDERED POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE AND THERE IS LONG WAITING LIST OF HONG KONG RESIDENTS FOR GOVT HOUSING. IF HOUSING WERE GIVEN TO BOAT CASE REFUGEES, IT WOULD CAUSE CRITICISM, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF HONG KONG GOVT POLICY IN TURNING BACK REFUGEES SEEKING ENTER HONG KONG FROM CHINA.

5. CONGEN BELIEVES THAT BEST METHOD OF RESOLVING POTENTIAL ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM WOULD BE UNHCR VISIT TO HONG KONG FOR THAT PURPOSE. IF OTHER HOTELS WHICH WOULD ACCOMMODATE REFUGEES CANNOT BE LOCATED, UNHCR COULD ATTEMPT RENT AND REFURNISH BUILDING TO HOUSE REFUGEES. IT APPEARS TO US THAT UNHCR IS NOT TAKING POTENTIAL PROBLEM SERIOUSLY AND WITHOUT PROMPTING WILL ALLOW SITUATION TO DRIFT.
SHOESMITH

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